

## Unit 5: Holidays and Observances

### Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

### Be aware of the following

- Impact of holidays on tactical operations
- Solar/lunar calendar differences
- Common Era abbreviations
- Muslim calendar distinctions
- Jewish calendar distinctions
- Two high holy days of Judaism
- Passover's importance for Jewish faithful
- Eastern Orthodox Christian calendar distinctions
- Four important Muslim holidays
- Importance of Friday as the day of Muslim communal prayers
- For Orthodox Eastern Christians, the Easter season is the focus of church year celebration
- Festivals and home celebrations for Jewish, Russian Orthodox and Muslim peoples

### Identify

- Solar/lunar; Julian/Gregorian calendars
- Christmas, Easter, Epiphany
- C.E., B.C.E., A.H., Ramadan, muezzin
- Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesah
- Hijra, Ashura, Isaac
- Shia, Sunni, imam, zakut
- Lent, Pascha, Pentecost, Theotokos, chrismation
- Ash Wednesday, confirmation, Ascension
- Mawlid al-Nabiy, 'Id al-Fitr, Id al-Adha
- Epiphany

## Realize

- Julian calendar influence in Orthodox Eastern Christianity
- Reasons for variation of Easter date each year
- Importance of events in the life of Mary (Theotokos) in the church calendar of Orthodox Eastern Christians

## Unit 5: Holidays and Observances

*"You'd better understand the environment, the culture, because what may make sense to you may not make sense on the ground and may actually be counterproductive."*

-- General Zinni, CENTCOM Commander, 27 Dec 1998

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### I. Introduction



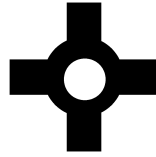
Knowledge of key holidays and observances contributes to sensitivity and awareness of Middle East culture. In addition, tactical operations also may be directly affected as a result of religious holidays and events.

The book entitled The Ramadan War, 1973, by Hasan Badri, Taha Magdoub and Muhammad Dia El Din Zohdy treats the Arab/Israeli Conflict of 1973 from an Egyptian/Syrian perspective. In Chapter 4, entitled "Surprise!," the authors demonstrated the importance of holidays/ observances in tactical operations.

In determining the Egyptian/Syrian deception plan, the aim was to conduct an attack with deceit, secrecy and concealed timing. October 1973 was a month presenting Israeli national and religious holidays.



The choice of 6 October to begin the war was deliberate. Surprise would be paramount as that date was Yom Kippur, the Jewish Sabbath and also the tenth of Ramadan.



## II. Calendar Variations

The following information, adapted from The Multifaith Calendar, David Spence ed., identifies important holidays related to the major Middle East religions--Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

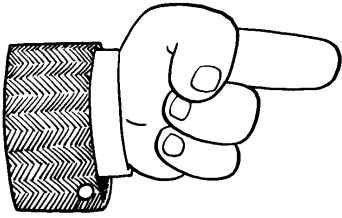
### 1. Solar and Lunar Calendars

Beliefs about the world and human interaction within that world determine, in part, how different cultures measure time. Some indicate time according to the sun (solar calendars). Others follow after the moon (lunar calendars). The lunisolar calendar combines aspects of both.

### 2. Christian Calendars

**a. Julian** The Julian calendar, used by Eastern Christianity, was the forerunner to the calendar most Americans currently use (the Gregorian). Instituted by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C., the Julian calendar bases its calculations on the length of time it takes the earth to revolve around the sun. Though accurate for its day, the Julian calendar was off calculation just over eleven minutes each year. By the mid-1500s, this Julian calendar was 10 days behind the solar year.

**b. Gregorian** In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII introduced reforms, which by the 1700s became known as the Gregorian calendar.



Christian churches in the West adopted this calendar exclusively. It is now used internationally in business, education, and the military. Most Eastern churches still use the Julian calendar for religious purposes--especially in determining the date of Easter.

Christmas and Pentecost may follow the Gregorian outline. Today, the Julian and Gregorian calendars are approximately 13 days out of phase.

**c. The Church Year** Five incidents in the life of Jesus, plus one marking the beginning of the church, form the foundation for the Christian year. These events include Jesus' birth, **Christmas**; baptism and/or the adoration of the Magi or Wise Men, **Epiphany**; crucifixion, **Holy Friday** or **Good Friday**; resurrection, **Pascha** or **Easter**; **Ascension**; and the descent of the Holy Spirit onto the early disciples, **Pentecost**.

**d. Easter** Why does the Easter date vary from year to year?



Fixed holidays of the Christian year (Christmas, Epiphany), determined by solar calculations, occur on standard dates. Easter, however, (and the sacred days associated with it--Holy Friday, Pentecost, and Ascension), varies from year to year. These spring dates are set in relation to the moon and March equinox when the sun passes the equator, making night and day of equal length in all parts of the earth. Eastern churches calculate Easter slightly differently, making it one to five weeks later than in Western churches.

**e. B.C., A.D., C.E., B.C.E.**

Marked by the birth of Jesus, the Christian era (Anno Domini, Latin for "the year of our Lord") is

## Unit 5: Holidays and Observances

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abbreviated A.D. Dates before the birth of Christ are designated as B.C.

Presently, the initials B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) indicate B.C. (Before Christ.) C.E. (Common Era) denotes A.D. (Anno Domini--in the year of our Lord.)



### 3. The Muslim Calendar

a. A.H. The lunar calendar determines festive dates in the Islamic calendar. Months alternate between 29 and 30 days. This results in a year 354 days long ( $29.5 \times 12 = 354$ ), roughly 11 days short of the solar year. Thus, Muslim festival dates, compared to the Gregorian calendar, vary from year to year.

The migration (Hijra, HIJ-rah) of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina (A.D. 622) begins the Islamic calendar. The Islamic year A.H. 1417 (Anno Hegirae, 'the year of the Hijra'), begins on Gregorian calendar 18 May 1996.

#### b. Ramadan (RAH-mah-dahn)



In the ninth month, Muslims fast from first appearance of light to sunset. Depending on the hourly length of days (whether Ramadan falls in summer, winter, spring or fall), fasting may require either very long or short days, depending on the season.

**c. Muharram** (muh-HAR-rahm) and **Dhul-Hijja** (thul-HIJ-yuh) Two other months are special--Muharram, which begins the year, and Dhul-Hijja, the last month which is the time of pilgrimage.

Though the moon determines the dating of festivals, prayer times follow the rising and setting sun. During Ramadan, Muslims observe the fast from the first appearance of light to sunset.

### 4. The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish calendar incorporates both lunar and solar elements. Essentially a lunar calendar, it is periodically adjusted to the solar year. Each month begins with the appearance of the new moon and has either 29 or 30 days. The annual cycle of festivals begins with the month of Nisan (March or April of the Gregorian calendar). **Pesah** (Passover) is the first festival of the year.

Orthodox and Conservative Jewish people living outside Israel celebrate Pesah (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks), and Sukkot (Feast of Booths) up to two days longer than Reform practitioners.

The Jewish religious day runs from sunset to sunset rather than midnight to midnight.

Festivals thus normally begin on evenings prior to dates expressed on a calendar.

### III. Jewish Observances

#### 1. Festivals and Holy Days

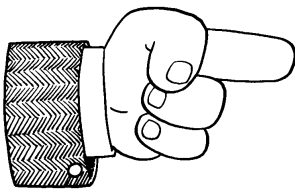
**a. Rosh Hashanah** (rohsh ha-shah-NAH), New Year's Day



The beginning of the Jewish calendar. Celebrated for two days, it marks the anniversary of the creation of the world. The day serves as a day of examination for all people, the examiner being the righteous and merciful creator.

**b. Yom Kippur** (YOHM kee-poor), Day of Atonement

Stresses repentance and forgiveness needed to reestablish oneness with God. One first seeks forgiveness from others and forgives those who have caused pain. Then comes confession of sin and seeking forgiveness from God. Yom Kippur is the most important and most personal holy day.



Both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the "High Holidays"--the two most important Jewish festivals of the year. Of these, Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year.

**c. Pesah** (PAY-sah), (Passover), commemorates the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. The eight day observance consists of reciting special prayers and eating symbolic foods. The first and last two days of



Pesah are ones of special observance. This remembrance is a high point of Jewish life.

**d. Shavuot** (shah-voo-OHT) [Weeks--plural of the Hebrew word for seven] marks the conclusion of the seven week period following Passover. The day commemorates the giving of the Torah to the Israelites.

**e. Sukkot** (soo-KOHT) [Feast of Booths or Tabernacles] lasts for eight days. Its meaning comes from the practice of building booths (Sukkot) in fields during harvest. It also commemorates the temporary structures in which the Israelites lived following their departure from Egypt. Sukkot is a time of thanksgiving, celebrating God's presence in creation and among the Jewish people. The Eighth Day (Shmini Atzeret) is a distinct festival, marking the end of Sukkot.

**f. Simhat Torah** (SIM-khahs TOOR-ah, Rejoicing of the Law) indicates the completion and new beginning of the annual cycle of Torah reading in the synagogue.



**g. Hanukkah** (HAH-nah-kah, Feast of Lights/Feast of Dedication) celebrates the victory of Judas the Maccabee for religious freedom and rededication of the Temple in 165 B.C. This eight day remembrance also honors the power of God and His faithfulness to Israel.

**h. Purim** (POO-rim) The festival remembers the deliverance of the Jewish people during the time of Esther. A reading from the Megillah (m'gee-LAH) or scroll of the book of Esther occurs on this date, usually in late February or early March.

## 2. Life Cycle Events

**a. Birth ceremony** Called a brit (breet) or covenant, these rituals welcome newborn males and females into the Jewish community.



**(1) Brit milah** (breet mee-LAH) This covenant of circumcision happens on the eighth day of a male baby's life. It is a sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people. A mohel (MOH-hail) or specially trained circumciser may accompany the rabbi. Congratulations or mazal tov (MAH-zahl tohv) are appropriate greetings after the birth ceremony.

**(2) Brit bat** (breet baht) A naming ceremony is given for female babies, held either at the synagogue or at home.

**b. Initiation events** To mark entry into adulthood, and the acceptance of personal responsibility for sins, takes place during these rites, usually held upon reaching age 13. Bar and bat mitzvahs occur in conjunction with congregational prayers, a quorum of 10 Jewish people (minyan, "MIN-yahn") being required.

**(1) Bar mitzvah** (bahr MITS-vah) Boys who reach age 13 are the focus of this ceremony.

**(2) Bat mitzvah** (baht MITS-vah) Females at age 12 or 13 (12 years and one day) are the focus here. Though no requirement is present for the female initiation ceremony, since early in this century it is becoming commonplace. A long celebratory meal may follow the occasion.



**c. Marriage** The Hebrew word for marriage, *kiddushin* (kee-doo-SHEEN), meaning sanctification, accentuates the sacred bond present in this religious ceremony. Vows are said under a canopy (*huppah*, "hoo-PAH"), which symbolizes the expanse of the heavens under which all life takes place. Though open to interpretation, the glass which the groom breaks under foot after the vows are stated commemorates great sadness--even in a time of great joy--and recalls the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**d. Death** Funerals usually take place the day after death. At the graveside, a rabbi leads in the *kaddish* (KAH-dish) or prayer for the departed. For seven days after the funeral, the *shiva* (SHIH-vah) period, the family sits in mourning. The year anniversary of the death, a *yahrzeit* (YAHR-tzite) is marked by a service and lit candle in the home.

### 3. Home Events

**a. Passover Seder** (SAY-dihr) This traditional dinner, remembering the freedom of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, is held around the dinner table. A seder plate contains symbols of the Passover event. *Matzah* (MAH-tzah), a flat, unleavened bread is present, symbolizing the bread eaten during the Exodus. The *haggadah* (hah-GAH-dah) text relates the Biblical story of the Passover.

**b. Shabbat dinner** Shabbat (shah-BAHT), the Jewish Sabbath, remembers the rest which God the creator took after six days of creation. It is a traditional Friday evening meal shared by the family. Sabbath candles are lit. The *kiddush* (kee-DOOSH), a prayer accompanying the wine before dinner, is said. The *ha'motzi* (hah-MOH-tsee) blessing comes over the bread. A loaf of *challah* (HAH-lah) or braided, special Sabbath bread, accompanies the meal.

## IV. Orthodox Festivals and Observances

### 1. Holy Days and Celebrations

**a. Pascha** (PAS-kah) or Easter is the highlight of orthodox calendar feasts and fasts. All other moveable church events flow from Easter. Celebrations and observances which occur during this season include



**(1) Pre-Lent Sundays** The four Sundays before Lent offer preparation for this season. Theme of the Sundays include (a) the publican and Pharisee--humility; (b) prodigal son--return to Father; (c) meatfare Sunday--last day to eat meat until Easter (judgment); and (d) cheese-fare Sunday--last day of eating eggs or dairy products until Easter (forgiveness).

**(2) Lent** Beginning seven weeks before Easter, this season is a time for fasting, prayer, study and worship.

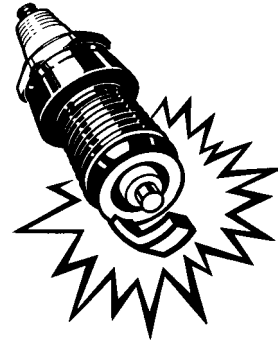
**(3) Lazarus Saturday/Palm Sunday** The day before Palm Sunday honors Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. Willows may be distributed to parishioners as part of the special service. Palm Sunday commemorates Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

**(4) Holy (Passion) Week** Each day of the week before Easter focuses upon the sufferings, betrayal, death and burial of Christ.

**(5) Easter (Holy Pascha)** This midnight service invites participants to sing "Christ is risen from the dead." An icon of Christ destroying the gates of hell may take a prominent place in the church. The date usually occurs one week after most Protestant and Roman Catholic celebrations of the Easter event.

**(6) Ascension** 40 days after Easter, this observance commemorates the ascension of Christ into heaven.

**(7) Pentecost** This day marks the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit upon the early church. It occurs 50 days after Easter. On the eve of Pentecost, the church remembers those who have departed this life.



### b. Feast Days of Christ

**(1) Nativity/Christmas** (25 December) The incarnation of God in the flesh, is Christmas. The pious faithful often precede it with a 40 day fast from meat and dairy products. The traditional greeting is "Christ is born! Glorify Him!"



**(2) Epiphany** (ih-PIHF-ah-nee, 6 January) This celebration remembers the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River and accompanying manifestation of his divinity when the dove descended upon him. The traditional greeting is "Christ is born! Glorify Him!" Orthodox throughout the world may also bless the waters (lakes, rivers, seas) especially where navigation takes place.

**(3) Meeting of the Lord** (2 February) The faithful remember Christ's presentation at the temple and meeting with Simeon and Anna on this day.

**(4) Transfiguration** (6 August) The divinity of Christ, manifested through his glorified nature experienced on Mount Tabor, is remembered on the transfiguration.

**(5) Elevation of the Cross** (14 September)  
Orthodox commemorate the finding of the cross by St. Helen (4th century) with fasting on this day.

**c. Feast Days of the Theotokos** Orthodox around the world remember events in the life of Mary, Jesus' mother. (1) The nativity (8 September) remembers her birth; (2) entrance of the theotokos (21 November) recalls Mary's presentation into the temple as a child; (3) Annunciation (25 March) commemorates Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she is chosen to be the mother of Christ; (4) the Dormition (15 August) remembers her death and glorification.

## 2. Life Cycle Events

**a. Birth** Chrismation (KRIZ-may-shun, confirmation, the anointing with holy oil), baptism and first communion occur together as part of the birth ceremony ritual. A priest officiates with godparents assisting in the ceremony. Congratulations or saying "may the child live a holy life" are traditional greetings.

**b. Marriage** This sacred union involves the giving and receiving of rings. Both bride and groom also wear a crown, which along with the rings, are symbols of the sacrifices to be made together, the priestly nature of marriage, and that the couple now reigns over their own creation.



**c. Death** Funerals take place usually 24 hours after death in Orthodox countries. The bereaved usually avoid social gatherings for two to twelve months. The first 40 days after death are times for black clothing. Memorial services occur on the 40th day or the Sunday nearest 40 days and one year after death.

**3. Home Celebrations** The house blessing comes when a family moves into a new or different home. It also may occur annually on January 6. A priest sprinkles holy water in each room, just as the waters of Jesus' baptism sanctified all creation at the Jordan River. A basil flower may be used to sprinkle the water. Candles, symbolic of Christ the light of the world, also may be employed.

## V. Muslim Festivals and Observances

### 1. Holy Days and Observances



Within Islam, Friday is the day of communal weekly gathering. Based upon the Lunar calendar, Muslims observe the following annual festivals and holidays.

#### a. Ramadan (RAH-mah-dahn)

Ramadan is a holy month of fasting wherein Muslims, who are physically able to refrain, do not eat, drink, smoke or engage in sexual activity, from the first sign of dawn until sunset. This month is a time for spiritual reflection and discipline. Pious adherents remember past sins. They express gratitude to God for his guidance. Many read through the entire Qur'an during this month.

The traditional Arabic greeting for Ramadan is "Ramadan Mubarak" (RAH-mah-dahn moo-BAR-ahk, "may God give you a blessed month"). Response is "Ramadan Karim" (RAH-mah-dahn KAH-reem, "May God give you a generous month").

**b. 'Id al-Fitr** (*i-EED al FAHT-ehr*, Festival of the Breaking of the Fast, ["Ramasan Bairam" *rahm-ah-sahn bah-ee-rahm* in the Serbian language]). Usually the holiday lasts for three days with family members gathering to exchange presents and celebrate together. When possible, the faithful attend mosques. It is also an occasion to pay special alms for the poor ("zakat al-fitr," *ZAH-kat al FAHT-ehr*).

Traditional Arabic greeting for Ramasan Bairam is "Id Mubarak" (*id moo-BAR-ahk*, "may God make it a blessed feast." Response is "Id Karim" (*id KAH-reem*, "may God make it a kind feast").

Along with 'Id al-Fitr, Id al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) comprise the two main Islamic festivals. It comes on the first day of the month Shawwal which follows Ramadan.

**c. Id al-Adha** (*i-EED ahl-OOHD-hah*, Festival of Sacrifice, ["Kurban Bairam" *koor-bahn bah-ee-rahm* in Serbian]).

This concluding act of pilgrimage usually occurs two to three months after Ramadan. Muslims offer sheep, goats, and camels in a pattern after Abraham's offering of his son Ismail (Ishmael) to God. The poor and needy receive the meat. Many Muslims observe the festival whether on pilgrimage or not.

Islam considers Ismail--the son of Abraham and Hagar (thus Abraham's "firstborn")--as the rightful heir, the son to be sacrificed. (In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Abraham's second son [Isaac, born of Sarah] is seen to be the true heir, the son to be sacrificed).



Traditional Arabic greeting for this day is "Id Mubarak" (*id moo-BAH-ahk*, "may God make it a blessed feast").



**d. Laylat al-Qadr** (LAHAY-let al-KAHD-ehr, Night of Power) commemorates the first revelation of the Qur'an. This event came to the Prophet Muhammad in 610 C.E. (A.D. 610), when he was forty years old. The observance includes the last 10 days of Ramadan as no one knows the exact night the Prophet first received God's revelation. Sometimes during this event, pious Muslims seclude themselves in a mosque, leaving only when necessary.

**e. Mi'Raj al-Nabiy** (mehr-raj al-NEB-bee) commemorates the ascension (al-Mi'Raj) of the Prophet to heaven following his night journey (al-Isra') from Mecca to Jerusalem. Interpreted either symbolically or literally, the Qur'an records the event in Sura 17:1. While on this night journey, God commanded the Prophet to begin the practice of prayer five times each day.



**f. Nisf-Sha'ban** (nush-if sha-ah-BAHN, Night of Repentance) comes on the 14th day of the eighth month (Sha'ban)...in the middle (Nisf) of the month. It is a night of repentance in preparation for Ramadan.

**g. Mawlid al-Nabiy** (MOW lid oon-NA-bee, birthday of the Prophet) is the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. For many Muslims, this day ranks third in importance, after 'Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha.



**h. Jum'at al-Wada'** (juhm-at al-wha-DAH, Farewell Friday) is the last Friday of the month of Ramadan. Though not a strict festival, many Muslims consider it a special day.

**i. Day of Hajj** (al-HAHJ, Day of Arafat) comes on the ninth day of Dhul'Hihha (the month of pilgrimage). It commemorates the concluding revelation to the Prophet at Mt. Arafat, a mountain 18 kilometers east of Mecca. All Muslims on Hajj attend a service on the plains in front of Mt. Arafat (Waqfatu Arafat).

## 2. Life Cycle Events

### a. Birth ceremony

Called "akikah" (ah-KEE-kah) in Arabic, this brief, informal event welcomes a newborn infant into the home. The traditional Arabic greeting "Mabrook" (MAH-brook), meaning congratulations, is appropriate.



**b. Initiation rite** Taking "Shahada" (SHAH-hah-dah) or "witnessing" occurs anytime from the midteens upward. It is a declaration of the Muslim faith, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God." Two male Muslims or eight female Muslims witness the event.

An imam (EE-mahm/i-MAHM) leads the prayer and gives a sermon. A muezzin (MOO-ah-zin) calls the faithful to prayer. The Arabic term "mabrook" (MAH-brook) meaning congratulations, may be appropriate.

**c. Marriage** Unless financial or physical restrictions are present, pious Muslims marry.

Marriage is a social contract or covenant, not a sacrament. The ceremony, taking place in a mosque, is officiated at by an Imam. Two witnesses observe the contract between the bride and groom.



After the ceremony, a reception ("waleemah," wah-LEEh-mah) is common. Pious Muslims serve no alcohol at this celebration, though beverages and food abounds.

Traditional Arabic greetings include "mabrook alaik" (MAH-brook ah-LAYK, congratulations) if addressing the man; "mabrook alaiki" (MAH-brook ah-LAYK-ee) if speaking to the bride.

**d. Funeral rites** Traditionally two to three days after death the funeral takes place. Calls or visits to bereaved families entail quiet sitting, offering a prayer and condolences to the bereaved family members. An imam presides at the ceremony. At the graveside, Janazah (jah-NAH-zah) prayers for the dead, are recited. The deceased is buried, never cremated.



"See problems as opportunities."

## Vocabulary List: Holidays and Observances

**Ascension** Day in Eastern Orthodoxy which recalls Christ's going up into heaven

**Chrismation** (KRIZ-may-shun) Confirmation, baptism and first communion event held for an Eastern Orthodox baby

**Epiphany** (ih-PIHF-ah-nee) Orthodox Eastern celebration remembering the baptism of Jesus and manifestation of his divinity with a dove descending upon his head

**Hajj, Day of** (al-HAHJ) Day remembering the concluding revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad

**Hanukkah** (HAH-nah-kah) Feast of Lights/Feast of Dedication, which celebrates the victory of Judas the Maccabee for religious freedom and rededication of the temple in 165 B.C.

**Id al-Adha** (i-EED ahl-OOHD-hah) Festival of sacrifice remembering Abraham's offering up his son Ismail on the altar. Called "Kurban Bairam" (koor-bahn bah-ee-rahm) in Serbian.

**Id al-Fitr** (i-EED al FAHT-ehr) Festival of the breaking of the Ramadan fast. Called "Ramasan Bairam" (rahm-ah-sahn bah-ee-rahm) in Serbian

**Imam** (EE-mahm/i-MAHM) Leader in Muslim prayers who often gives a sermonic talk

**Janazah** (jah-NAH-zah) Prayer service for Muslims at the graveside

**Lent** Time of fasting, prayer, study and worship some seven weeks before Easter

**Mawlid al-Nabi** (MOW lid oon-NA-bee) Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad

**Mazal tov** (MAH-zahl tohv) Hebrew for congratulations. An appropriate saying for after Jewish life-cycle celebrations.

**Mi'Raj al-Nabiy** (mehr-raj al-NEB-bee) Remembers the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to heaven following his night journey

**Mitzvah, Bar/Bat** (MITS-vah, bahr/baht) Initiation rite for Jewish young people aged 13 years and above.

**Muezzin** (MOO-ah-zin) One who calls the faithful Muslims to prayer

**Pascha** (PAS-kah) Orthodox Eastern Easter

**Pentecost** Day marking the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit upon the early church

**Pesah** (PAY-sah) Jewish Passover, commemorating the departure of the Israelites from Egypt

**Ramadan** (RAH-mah-dahn) Holy month of fasting for Muslims. No eating, drinking, smoking or engaging in sexual relations occurs from sun up to sun down.

**Rosh Hashanah** (rohsh ha-shah-NAH) New Year's Day, the beginning of the Jewish calendar. It marks the anniversary of the creation of the world.

**Seder** (SAY-dihr) Traditional dinner at Passover time, where Jewish people remember freedom from slavery in Egypt

**Theotokos** Orthodox Eastern term for Mary, the Mother of God

**Transfiguration** Day in Eastern Orthodoxy, which recalls Christ's divine nature, where his face shown brightly on the mountain.

**Yom Kippur** (YOHM kee-poor) Day of Atonement, the most important Jewish holy day. Repentance, forgiveness and a right relationship with God is the emphasis.

**Zakat** (ZAH-kat) Alms taken for poorer Muslim peoples and causes

## Review Quiz: Holidays and Observances



**Part 1--Fill in the Blanks** Fill in the blanks with the most correct word immediately following each section. Not all words listed will be used.

Among pious Muslims, (1)\_\_\_\_\_ and (2)\_\_\_\_\_ are the two main festivals of the year. Id al-Fitr is the festival held for breaking the month long fast, or (3)\_\_\_\_\_. Special alms (4) \_\_\_\_\_ taken for the poor may also be received during this celebration.

Id al-Adha, the festival of (5)\_\_\_\_\_, remembers Abraham's offering up of his son (6)\_\_\_\_\_ on the altar.

Laylat al-Qadr, the night of (7)\_\_\_\_\_, remembers the first revelation of the Qur'an. Mi' Raj al-Nabiy commemorates the ascension of the (8)\_\_\_\_\_ Muhammed to heaven following his night journey.

The birthday of the Prophet (9)\_\_\_\_\_ is a day ranking third in importance for many Muslims. The day of Hajj commemorates the concluding revelation to the prophet Muhammed (10)\_\_\_\_\_.

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Ramadan  
Prophet  
Mt. Arafat  
Ishmael

Id al-Fitr  
sacrifice  
power

Id al-Adha  
zakat al-fitr  
Mawlid al-Nabiy

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Within Muslim practice, a(n) (11)\_\_\_\_\_ leads the faithful in prayer and gives a sermonic talk. A(n) (12)\_\_\_\_\_ calls congregates to prayer.

For Orthodox Eastern Christians (13)\_\_\_\_\_ or Easter events are the highest of the church calendar. (14)\_\_\_\_\_ is the time before Easter dedicated to feasting, prayer, study and worship. Coming forty days after Easter, (15)\_\_\_\_\_ remembers Christ's going into Heaven. (16)\_\_\_\_\_ marks the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit upon the early church.

(17)\_\_\_\_\_ remembers the baptism of Christ and the descent of a dove upon him. Feast days of (18)\_\_\_\_\_ remember events around the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The two most important Jewish high holy days are (19) \_\_\_\_\_ and Yom Kippur. Of these (20) \_\_\_\_\_ is the holiest day of the year.

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Ascension  
Pentecost  
Hanukkah  
Theotokos  
Rosh Hashanah

Lent  
Yom Kippur  
imam  
Purim

muezzin  
Epiphany  
Pascha  
Pesah

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**Part 2--Multiple Choice** Place the letter of the most correct answer in the blank provided.

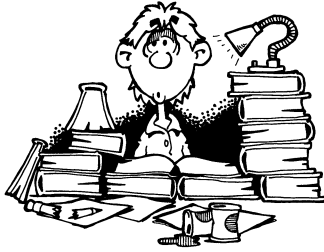
1. \_\_\_\_\_ During Ramadan, pious Muslims
  - a. fast from noon to midnight.
  - b. drink only water for the entire month.
  - c. do not eat, drink, smoke or engage in sexual activity from dawn to sunset.
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Jewish festival remembering the deliverance of Jewish people during the time of Esther is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Pesah
  - b. Purim
  - c. Brit milah
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The two most important festivals of the Muslim calendar are
  - a. Mawlid al-Nabiy (birthday of the Prophet) and Day of Hajj.
  - b. Akikah (birth ceremony) and Nisf-Sha'ban (Night of Repentance).
  - c. Id al-Adha (festival of sacrifice) and 'Id al-Fitr (festival of breaking of the Fast).
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ At death, Muslim faithful are
  - a. always cremated.
  - b. always buried.
  - c. buried when convenient, cremated otherwise.
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ At a Jewish wedding, the breaking of a wine glass by the groom after stating vows most readily symbolizes
  - a. good times are no longer.
  - b. the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by Rome in A.D. 70.
  - c. a christening of the new marriage relationship.



6. \_\_\_\_\_ For Orthodox Eastern Christians, \_\_\_\_\_ is the highlight of the church calendar.
- a. Christmas
  - b. Easter
  - c. Pentecost
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The term \_\_\_\_\_ describes Orthodox Eastern feast days centering around the life of Mary, Jesus' mother.
- a. dormition
  - b. maturity
  - c. Theotokos
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Orthodox Eastern faithful anoint infants with holy oil at a service of
- a. kumstvo.
  - b. slava.
  - c. chrismation.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ A special braided loaf, called \_\_\_\_\_ or Sabbath bread, usually accompanies a Jewish Shabbat dinner.
- a. Wonder
  - b. pita
  - c. challah
10. \_\_\_\_\_ For Eastern Orthodox faithful, the Feast Days of \_\_\_\_\_ are times of reflection and fasting before Easter.
- a. Lent
  - b. Theotokos
  - c. Thanksgiving



"Celebrate something daily."



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"I truly believe that the ultimate determinant in the struggles that we will face will not be tanks and airplanes, but a test of wills and national character...a trial of spiritual resolve...the values we hold...the beliefs we cherish...the ideals to which we are dedicated. These intangibles are America's strength."

General Charles Krulak

